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SUBJECT: EASTERN CHAD REFUGEES: CONTINGENCY PLANNING

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11. Summary. UN and NGO contingency planning for new refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in eastern Chad is significantly constrained by site availability. Sites exist on a permanent or transit basis for roughly 35,000 refugees. If an influx exceeds this absorption capacity, UNHCR may transfer refugees directly to an undeveloped site at Hadjer Ibaïd and send Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) and Oxfam to provide services on an emergency basis. Food and non-food contingency stocks are in place to accommodate 50,000 people. Humanitarians are struggling to establish new IDP sites in the Goz eïda as IDPs increase due to insecurity. End summary.

The Nut and Bolts of Refugee Contingency lanning

12. From October 1-21, PRM/AFR Neil Ahlsten visited the twelve refugee camps in eastern Chad and three IDP camps near Goz Beïda and Koukou to evaluate humanitarian programs and contingency planning. Over the past year, UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF and numerous NGOs have worked on various contingency plans for the arrival of new refugees or IDPs. UNHCR is the lead for refugee contingency planning, while IDP planning largely follows the UN cluster-lead approach. In practice, some NGOs in health and shelter have used private funding to provide IDP services independent of the UN system. Most of the food and non-food items for new refugees and IDPs are incorporated into one plan with stocks of most items available for 50,000 people, while contingency site planning for the two populations are distinct. Contingency planning must be revised frequently because of the multiple, overlapping security factors that fluctuate frequently, including security in Darfur, volatile relations between Chad and Sudan, the movements of Chadian rebels and attacks against humanitarian assets.

13. UNHCR's primary strategy for accommodating 50,000 new refugees is to leverage the existing camp capacity to provide temporary space and services. UNHCR would establish reception points in the border areas where new refugees arrive, screen them to ensure there are no combatants, provide high nutrition energy biscuits and transport the most vulnerable back to existing camps. The bulk of the refugees would move on foot to secure midpoints away from the border from where they would be moved by truck to existing camps. Gaga Camp would be a permanent site for up to 15,000 refugees, and Mile Camp a site for up to 3,000. The rest would be transferred to new camps once they are developed, though past experience in eastern Chad has shown that it is extremely difficult to move refugees from temporary sites (Am Nabak and Oure Cassoni Camps are clear examples where a highly-charged political environment

has hardened attitudes among refugees against relocation).

14. UNHCR has contingency stocks for roughly 36,000 people in Abeche and 2,000 in each of its field offices, though site visits revealed that their field offices frequently dipped into these stocks to meet immediate shortfalls. UNHCR has built and maintained its contingency stocks by cutting back on distributions to the current caseload of refugees. UNHCR/Chad has operated at 80 percent of its original 2006 appeal due to the global UNHCR funding shortage, and the original country budget did not include the addition of new stocks. Consequently it has freed up resources by lowering distribution quantities of items such as soap, blankets and jerry cans. UNHCR has stopped tent distributions for all except the new arrivals, and is encouraging refugees to construct their own housing. WFP is rebuilding its contingency stocks following the rainy season, and expects to have a two month food stock for the existing refugee and IDP populations which would it would draw from in the event of a new influx. In addition to WFP's contingency stock of food, IFRC maintains a two month food supply for 20,000 in Hadjer Hadid.

Rethinking Contingency Planning In the Face of Insecurity

15. Conflict has either put into question or eliminated altogether some of the absorption capacity that was originally identified in existing sites. Goz Amir and Djabal Camps, which were slated to host temporarily a

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combined 15,000 new arrivals, are near the site Chadian rebel incursions and close to attacks against non-Arab villages (see reflet A). Oure Cassoni Camp was also slated to be a temporary site for 15,000 new arrivals. However, Oure Cassoni Camp is currently in the process of being moved following the JEM and SAF confrontations within 7km of the camp on October 8 and UNHCR has essentially eliminated it from contingency planning.

16. To maintain the 50,000 figure in the face of the deterioration in security, UNHCR boosted on paper the number of refugees to be temporarily housed in other camps even though this may be far beyond their actual absorption capacity. The figure for Iridimi and Touloum camps grew from 2,000 to 8,000, which would drop the water supply to an abysmal emergency ration of 5 liters per person per day were the plan to be enacted. These camps are already stretched beyond the resource availability and goodwill of local authorities with the existing number of refugees and would be extremely hard pressed to absorb new refugees for even one or two months. The outgoing head of UNHCR's field office in Iriba said that the plan for Iridimi and Touloum "is simply not viable." He noted that UNHCR would also face significant resistance from local authorities if it were to attempt to bring this many new arrivals, especially if they are from non-Zaghawa tribes. The bottom line is that temporary sites are realistically available for 35,000 new refugees if Goz Amir and Djabal Camps are secure, and 20,000 if they are not.

17. In response to this lack of sites, UNHCR is developing a complementary emergency plan for 20,000 new arrivals. Local and national authorities have provisionally accepted the establishment of a new site in Hadjer Ibaid, which is halfway between Abeche and Goz Beida. The site is located alongside a wadi that appears to have significant water potential. If inflows exceed the 35,000 person capacity of the

existing camps, UNHCR would directly transfer refugees to this undeveloped site. MSF and Oxfam have already agreed that they would provide immediate, though rudimentary, assistance in health, nutrition and water, which would provide a minimal level of basic assistance alongside shelter and non-food items distributions from UNHCR and food rations from WFP.

¶8. Humanitarians generally expect that they will be able to maintain at least a minimal amount of access to the refugee camps despite the rise in insecurity. Armed escorts or six-ton trucks have proven to be fairly effective for getting humanitarian workers to and from the camps, though by hardening these humanitarian targets along the roads they have probably hastened the phenomena of carjackers attacking in towns and NGO compounds. If humanitarians are forced to evacuate, plans are still in place to have refugees or local Chadians run essential services such as primary health care, nutrition, food distributions and water delivery systems. A two-week fuel supply is in place for water pumps at most camps. IRC increased the fuel stock in Oure Cassoni Camp to one month because of the precarious circumstances. Thus far, no one has targeted the water pump fuel supplies in the camps.

Contingencies for Newly Displaced Chadians

¶9. Given the deteriorating security situation in the Goz Beida area, WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF and several NGOs continue to revise their contingency planning for new IDPs. Humanitarians and local authorities have agreed to find multiple sites for populations of 2,000 to 3,000 newly displaced on the basis that these smaller sites would be more sustainable and have less of an impact on surrounding villages in the event that they stay more than a few months. However, persistent insecurity around Goz Beida is greatly slowing the process of site identification and establishment. In practice, the development of water in existing IDP sites has been very slow and will likely remain a weakness for the establishment of new camps.

¶10. Thus far, NGOs such as INTERSOS and MSF have been able to use some private funds to support NFI distributions. It is unclear if they will be able to continue doing so if there are additional arrivals. ICRC maintains a contingency stock in Goz Beida for 5,000 - 6,000 families, including 2862 plastic sheets, 1885 jerry cans, 6,106 mats, 6,081 blankets and 996kg of soap. In the event of a major new displacement, UNHCR's refugee stocks would likely be drawn upon.

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